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ABSTRACT

Outreach has recently played an increasingly significant role in education and training for adults. In particular, the emphasis of Great Britain's REPLAN program on increasing the participation of unemployed adults in education and the impact of decreasing numbers of 16- to 19-year-old students in some colleges of further education have given impetus to the development of outreach work. This report examines the setting for outreach in terms of individuals' experience of unemployment and the emergence of unemployment groups. It describes in case studies three initiatives taken by educational providers that have promoted and fostered such groups. The interaction between unemployment groups and educational institutions is analyzed and explored. Issues are raised concerning the rationale, resources, methods, skills, and outcomes of outreach in this context. The report provides colleges with guidance, information, insights, and techniques for use in developing work with unemployed adults. It also indicates to unemployment groups how they may more adequately use, influence, and contribute to educational services. A list of 42 references is included. (KC)

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Outreach and Inreach

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- The programme is funded by the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office; certain elements of the programme are also supported financially by the Training Agency. On behalf of REPLAN, the FEU and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) are managing complementary programmes of development projects and NIACE is employing and managing an advisory team of field officers led by a national co-ordinator.
- Staff development programmes are being organised by NIACE in collaboration with the Regional Advisory Councils for further education, with participants drawn from a wide range of institutions and agencies in the statutory and voluntary sectors.
- Education Support Grants have been allocated to many local education authorities to strengthen the planning and co-ordination of provision for unemployed adults in their areas.
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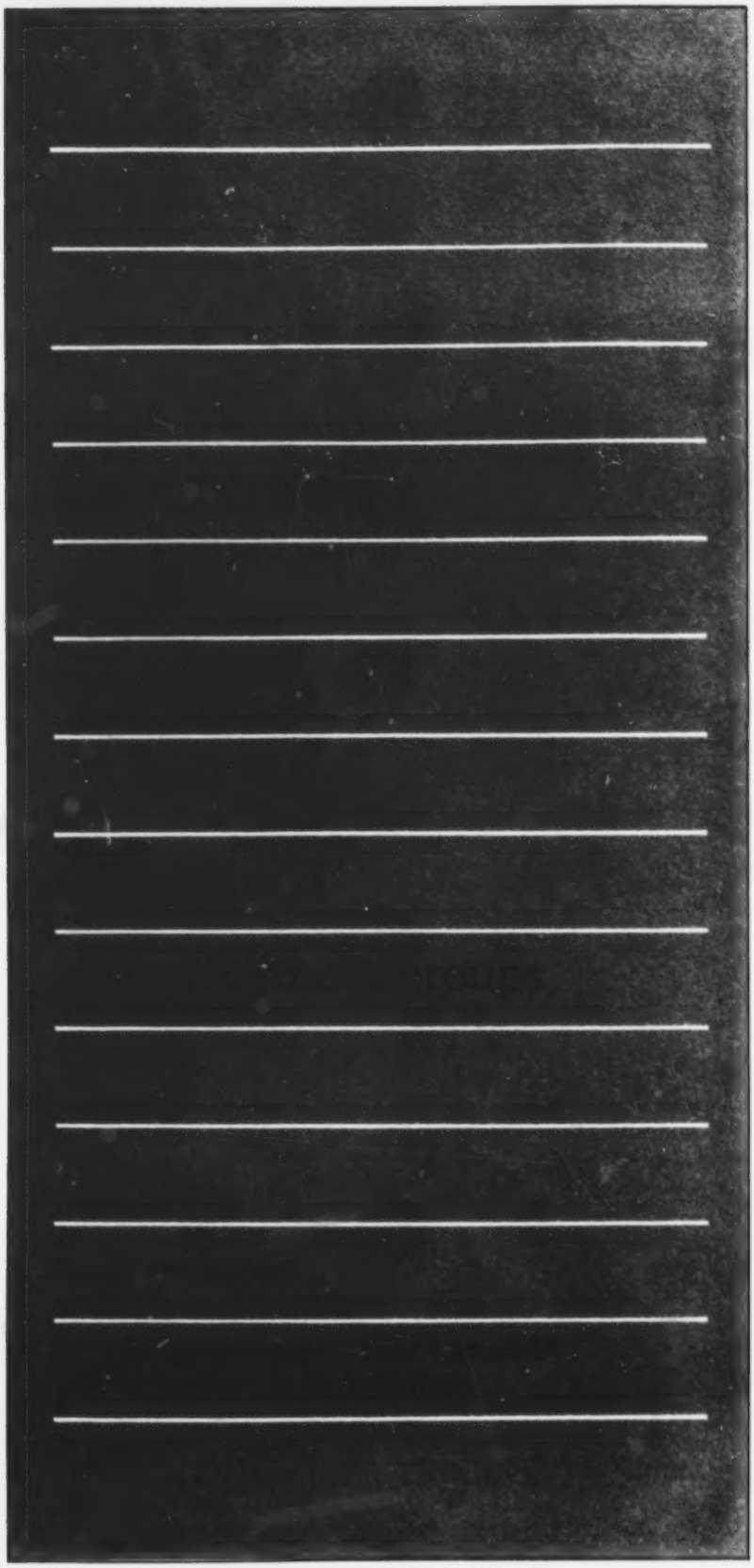

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FOREWORD

Background

Outreach has recently played an increasingly significant role in education and training for adults. In particular, the emphasis of the REPLAN programme on increasing the participation of unemployed adults in education and the impact of decreasing numbers of 16- to 19-year-old students in some colleges of further education have given an impetus to the development of outreach work. The emergence, through the efforts of LEAs, voluntary bodies and the MSC (now the Training Agency), particularly through its Voluntary Projects Programme, of a range of groups, usually self-programming, set up to attract and assist unemployed people has offered the further and adult education services a new context for outreach work with its own ethos and special features.

Content

This report examines the setting for outreach in terms of individuals' experience of unemployment and the emergence of unemployment groups. It goes on to describe three initiatives taken by educational providers which have promoted and fostered such groups. The interaction between unemployment groups and educational institutions is analysed and explored. Issues are raised concerning the rationale, resources, methods, skills and outcomes of outreach in this context.

Outcomes

The report provides colleges with guidance, information, insights and techniques for use in developing work with unemployed adults. It also indicates to unemployment groups how they may more adequately use, influence and contribute to educational services.

Target audience

The report will be of use to staff in colleges of further, adult and community education who are concerned with the design and provision of education services for unemployed adults, particularly where many potential clients can be reached through unemployment groups. The document will also be useful as a resource for those organising staff development opportunities for colleagues working with unemployed adults.

DENNIS H DRYSDALE
Deputy Chief Officer
Further Education Unit

1 INTRODUCTION

Outreach work is reported as having become an educational preoccupation nationally in a recent survey of unemployment Education Support Grant (ESG) projects (Krafchik, M. and Portwood, D., 1987). Reaching out to unemployed adults in their communities appears to be a key component in the LEAs' strategies to combat unemployment. The ESG projects identify the colleges (adult and FE) as the main agency in outreach work itself.

This report on outreach and inreach should be seen as complementary to the widely distributed and discussed FEU REPLAN report by Watts, A.G. and Knasel, E.G. (1985), *Adult Unemployment and the Curriculum*. While post-dating their report, strategically and tactically it is a preliminary to it, taking up the prior curricular issues of colleges making contact with unemployed adults, engaging their interest and actively involving them.

From this encounter, the colleges learn about and from unemployed adults. Such mutual involvement and learning is sometimes called inreach. It helps to answer the colleges' question of what is in outreach for them. At the very least, inreach contributes to curriculum planning and development. Thus this process also is complementary to the concerns of the Watts and Knasel report, taking up many of their themes, notably identifying learner needs, collaboration, negotiation, learning methods, monitoring and staff development.

This report elaborates these themes, examines the conditions (especially local conditions) under which they become significant and operational and also explores links between them. More generally, its examination of the outreach and inreach relationships between colleges and unemployment groups clarifies the LEAs' strategies on unemployment.

Interest in these questions arose at the Centre for Unemployment Studies, Wolverhampton Polytechnic, from research knowledge, practical experience and some failed initiatives. General household surveys and family case studies had indicated that unemployed people were experiencing breakdown and dissolution of many of their personal relationships and social bonds and, simultaneously, were distanced from and disinclined to use professional help. The two sides appeared to be unable to get together. Attempts to remedy both problems through the creation of drop-in centres proved abortive. Group identities of unemployed people and working relationships with professionals did not develop. The Centre for Unemployment Studies was challenged by its local authority to address the problem. It chose the outreach method of creating self-learning, self-determining, self-sustaining unemployment groups. This report chronicles, analyses and draws lessons from its efforts and those of other organisations and agencies which, in a similar manner, have tried to overcome the social isolation of unemployed people.

Almost all the original research was undertaken by Sarah Warke. The author of this report is deeply indebted to her and those many individuals she interviewed and institutions she visited. Their time, thinking, experiences, knowledge and reports are essential to this report (see Appendix I for a full list). The contributions of Philip Barnard, FEU Development Officer, were always pertinent and helpful. Lastly, the substantial literature on this subject has proved invaluable.

2 THE SETTING FOR OUTREACH

Outreach is from a diversity of institutions and agencies to people living in varying circumstances and conditions. These factors will heavily influence the types and processes of outreach which are required to achieve meaningful contact and involvement. In the case of unemployed people it must be remembered that unemployment is an abnormal state but it is variously experienced. Hence, a sending organisation and its outreach workers need to be aware of the major features of unemployment experiences if they are to frame appropriate strategies and action. The most pertinent for outreach are the individual's experience of unemployment and the emergence of unemployment groups.

INDIVIDUALS' EXPERIENCE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Accumulated research on the experience of unemployment reports that the vast majority of unemployed people are heavily disadvantaged and distressed by it. The primary reasons for these negative consequences are:

- Culturally, jobs and their accompanying wages are the main legitimate access route to status, income and power.
- State benefit provision, while available to certain categories of people without jobs, is perceived by many to be unjustified for able-bodied people of working age. These stigmatising attitudes and images can be manifested not only in interpersonal relationships but also in institutional rules and practices, especially when people in powerful positions are geographically and/or socially distanced from unemployment.
- The belief that a range of worthwhile activities suitable for all unemployed people are available. For instance, the MSC* Restart programme for all long-term unemployed people was premised on this belief.

COMMENT The implications for outreach are at attitudinal and ideological levels. Questions range from: 'Is it necessary?', 'Should anything be done?' to 'Can education do anything really useful (i.e. jobs) about it?' Hence a case has to be made at political, moral and practical levels.

Investigations of the experience

Extensive personal distress and hardship

The best-known summary of these consequences is the study by Warr, P. (1983). He lists the following (additional comments are in italics):

Reduced income: Under 10 per cent of unemployed people are at or above the level of their former income. Over half are on half that income.

A preoccupation with not getting into debt and an inability to maintain close relationships through not being able to give presents.

* *Since this report was written, the MSC has changed its name and is now the Training Agency.*

Reduced variety of activities: Unemployed people are severely house-bound but lack resources to be active around the house. There is less scope for 'leisure' activities.

Inadequacy of space and amenities, in most houses, to cater for all-day and everyday occupancy by a number of unemployed people. Outings are prohibited by cost or an inability to comply with the norms of 'pay-your-way' and 'treat others'.

Fewer goals and less 'traction': Jobs provide their own goals and open up others (not least in a voluntary capacity, e.g. trade union duties).

Difficult to resist 'What's it all for and why bother?' mentality.

Reduced scope for decision making: The lack of material, and maybe psychological resources, limit the range of realistic options.

Severe limitation of access to legitimate sources of finance (e.g. banks, hire purchase) because of unemployed status. Necessary pre-occupation with choices about the trivial.

Reduced scope for development and practice of skills: Non-availability of tools and equipment and loss of contacts limit the use and development of skills.

Some skills become obsolete, others out of date. Doubts arise over competency and the ability to be retrained.

Increased exposure to psychologically threatening experiences: Confronted with possibilities of humiliation in job seeking, money raising, benefit drawing and personal meetings with unsympathetic people.

Not only the effect on self-image but on their perceptions of other people's motives and attitudes. In another study, Warr, P. (1984) records the cognitive impairment of long-term unemployed people.

Increased insecurity about the future: Prospect of meaningless future, increasing unemployability and debt.

Inculcation of feelings of uselessness and helplessness; this may inhibit involvement in short-term projects on the grounds that it may cause 'hassle' with the authorities and raise expectations which cannot be realised.

Restricted interpersonal contacts: Limitation on circle of contacts.

Few resources for relationships based on 'mutual benefit' principles.

> 'One couple noted that they no longer participated in a mutual child-minding arrangement: "We found we couldn't afford the orange squash and crisps." ' (Portwood 1985b)

Reduced social status: Loss of socially accepted position and the roles and self-respect which accompany it.

Conferment of a new status – that of dependency. This affects every aspect of the unemployed person's life.

COMMENT Clearly, for the colleges, this analysis raised fundamental questions over their values, priorities, organisation and ability to deliver appropriate provision. Primarily, however, the issue is the personal attributes and qualities of the outreach worker. Sensitivity, approach-ability, commitment and hard-headedness would need to be prominent.

Breakdown of intimate relationships and natural groupings

Warr's analysis has already outlined dimensions and details of family and peer group stress. Other studies spell out the marital and family consequences in finer detail, for example:

- Burgoyne, J. (1985) draws attention to 'uncertainty and confusion about gender-related responsibilities'.
- Fagin, L. and Little, M. (1984) relate phases of unemployment to stages in the family life cycle, but they acknowledge that in certain cases unemployment is not harmful.
- McKnee, L. and Bell, C. (1986) noted that 'not only do the unemployed have no "universality of experience", but they are further divided against and amongst themselves'.
- Sofer, C. (1970) corrected any views that this is only a working-class experience when he summarised the position of redundant managers and technical specialists:

  'that release from the discipline of regular work was accompanied by family tension and emotional disturbance, that economic distress was sometimes the crucial last straw in breaking up a marriage, that the children of unemployed are susceptible to loss of prestige among school fellows, that the unemployed father may lose his authority over his children and esteem and leadership within the family (especially if the wife takes a job), that the children of an unemployed man lose a sense of security and tend to become resentful towards their parents, nervous and anti-social, and that their school performance deteriorates'.

Few studies of effects on communities have been published (although see Portwood, D. 1985b, on Wolverhampton), but Colin Parkes in Fagin, L. and Little, M. (1984) observed:

> 'the neuroses of unemployment are infectious. They may even infect entire sub-cultures in areas of high unemployment.'

COMMENT The challenge to outreach work is its group and collective effectiveness. Can it help repair, renew or create natural groupings and personal ties? This emphasises the need for collaboration with other professional and voluntary workers and may suggest the advisability of a team of outreach workers (*REPLAN Review No. 1*, DES, 1986).

Adverse experiences of state bureaucracy and lack of contact with professional helpers

In Wolverhampton, despite a comprehensive *Guide to Agencies and Provisions for Unemployed People* being available and widely distributed, and a massive campaign to get unemployed people to take up educational provision, the response to all kinds of professional and voluntary services was disappointingly low (Portwood, D. 1985a and 1985b).

Often the lack of knowledge was responsible, but deeply embedded stereotypes of providers and embittered experiences of officialdom raised barriers to communication and concourse.

> 'As well as ignorance and isolation, attitudinal barriers may need to be overcome. Education may be regarded as the minimum essential preparation for adult working life rather than as an ongoing process and a means toward the development and enrichment of personality. For those who believe that education ends with school and that real life begins with work, the whole concept of adult learning is novel.' (MacDonald, J. 1984.)

The root of the problem, however, mainly lies with the ethos of state provisions, and actual dealings with officials at employment centres and social security offices.

> 'The statements which people agreed with most concerned shame and stigma experienced by people on social security.' (Furnham, A. 1985.)
>
> 'A society so firmly anchored in an ethic of competition and reward will only with difficulty dispose of scarce resources to those conspicuously unsuccessful in a system ostensibly offering equal opportunities to all.' (Golding, P. and Middleton, S. 1982.)

All officialdom and authority tends to become tarred with this uncomplimentary brush.

> 'After you have been unemployed for some time you're sick to death of authority, you stay away from it.' (Pete, Bushbury Unemployed Group.)

COMMENT The problems of outreach workers who are professional people doing a professional job are self-evident. Their approach and tactics are clearly crucial if they are to secure credentials and support from unemployed people. For the colleges their image, systems of communication, information and reception obviously warrant close scrutiny. Ultimately the issue centres on earning respect which must begin with listening to and respecting the views of the other person.

> 'Outreach workers must have a fundamental respect for local people's views, experiences and potential, and see their own role as that of a facilitator rather than as a controller of resources and/or expertise.' (*REPLAN Review No. 1*, DES, 1986.)

Special difficulties by certain groups of unemployed people

The Stockton-Billingham Technical College's REPLAN and Restart surveys report that it is likely that the unemployed who do not take up FE will have at least one or more of the following characteristics:

- likely to be older, over 40 (especially males);
- unemployed for three years or more;
- likely to be semi-skilled or unskilled;
- living in rented accommodation (local authority);
- no previous educational qualifications;
- from families with little or no positive images of education gained from informal contacts, friends, peer groups, etc;
- living in areas geographically removed from the main college sites;
- from ethnic minority backgrounds;
- married women with children at home.

Other studies add unemployed people with special learning needs and other disabilities and ex-offenders, but in all cases it is relatively easy to spot the additional and exceptional difficulties faced by these various groupings.

However, some instances of less obvious difficulties are:

> 'As for men, unemployment for women means financial hardship, isolation and depression. However, unlike for men, it may not provoke a crisis of gender identity but it can mean 'a crisis of autonomy' because work may have been for women a route out of domestic and financial dependence.' (Coyle, A. 1980.)
>
> 'Often Asian women could only be reached through male members of their communities and organisations. The right approach by the most suitable person was needed.' (Centre for Educational Development and Training, Manchester Polytechnic 1985.)

Such suitable workers may be in short supply and in heavy demand, as was evident in the University of Leeds/Harehills Housing Aid REPLAN project for Asian women:

> 'It was essential to appoint at least one Asian woman worker, and this took several months; and two of the workers, after establishing contacts and developing valuable work, left because they were offered full-time permanent posts elsewhere.' (Groombridge, J. 1987.)
>
> 'The range of disability within the group includes cerebral palsy, partial deafness, mental handicap, behavioural problems and epilepsy. The wide range of problems has meant that each individual's programme of work has been different...we would recommend greater community emphasis and the incorporation of a drop-in facility...' (North Nottinghamshire College of FE project for unemployed and disabled students in a rural area. Groombridge, J. 1987.)

COMMENT: The great complexity illustrated in these cases indicates the difficulty of identifying, targeting and meeting the needs of these special groups. It raises the issue of the availability of human competencies and material resources. Equally it questions views of unemployed people as 'helpless victims' and asks how their capabilities can be harnessed.

> 'Whilst many individuals face similar problems (isolation, poverty, loss of dignity, status, stability and, above all, self-esteem) their responses vary a great deal and therefore educational programmes must be tailored to individual need. In spite of their position, many adults display remarkable creativity, resilience, sensitivity and individuality.' (Leeds LEA REPLAN Outreach Project Groombridge, J. 1987.)

EMERGENCE OF UNEMPLOYMENT GROUPS

Historically, substantial rises in unemployment are marked by renewed interest in the significance of groups (Richardson, J. 1987). Any effective counter to the effects of unemployment is thought to be at group and collective levels. However, unaided group developments by unemployed people themselves have tended to flounder because of lack of skills and resources. Hence, expertise in forming and running groups and sponsorship have become critical.

Support has come from a variety of sources, e.g. local authority, trade unions, MSC, community associations and adult education centres. However, such developments have been conditional:

- in some instances on a propitious political climate and organisation, for example, in cities such as Liverpool and Sheffield (Howard, R. and White, J. 1984). This has affected their focus and type of activity (often the centres are titled 'against unemployment' and have a pronounced campaigning function, e.g. see Sheffield City Council's *Guide to the Centres*). Usually these are supported mainly by local authorities and trade unions but there is no uniformity of political purpose and activity even within this type of group (e.g. trades union centres in SW England differ considerably in these respects from those in NW England);
- in most instances on 'outside' control of the aims, purposes, management and activities of the groups and centres. This has affected the types, methods, goals, content and outcomes of the learning which takes place within them (Ward, K. 1983).

COMMENT Outreach workers will often need to work with these centres and groups and may experience tension between their political sympathies, sponsorship demands and professional duties.

A parallel development has been the emergence of home-produced groups of unemployed people, sometimes instigated but invariably supported by a variety of agencies, predominantly from the educational sphere. With their commonality of experience and communality of interest, these groups have proved to be especially effective in creating the conditions for the realisation of the learning potential of unemployed people and for utilisation of services on offer.

Possible activities and learning experiences of these groups may be any one of six categories which Keith Percy has classified in respect of voluntary organisations (UDACE, 1987):

Interest: Pursuing a special interest, hobby, sport, craft, skill, etc. Learning is often one of the specific objectives of this type of organisation.

Service: Providing a service in health, social service, family welfare, etc. Workers are trained to provide the service, and there will also be informal or unplanned learning taking place.

Advocacy: Pursuing a political, religious or social 'cause'. While such organisations often have educational objectives, they may be 'closed' in who they admit, or in what ideas can be considered.

Community: Pursuing a common issue or concern. They include community arts or development groups, tenants associations, or care groups. Such groups often exist to provide some sort of learning activity for their members.

Vocational: Creating or preparing for employment. Such groups often have clear learning objectives which are often described as 'training' rather than 'education'.

Social: Bringing people together. The main or ostensible purpose is to reduce isolation, to gather people together, to entertain or develop friendships. Learning may be an accidental outcome but is rarely a planned activity of such groups.

COMMENT Outreach workers should be prepared to work with or develop any of these types or mixed types. Local conditions and interests, together with availability of resources, will usually determine the initial focus but this may not be maintained. The primary need is for an open-minded, flexible approach responsive to the expressed needs of unemployed people.

Clearly the diverse experiences and needs of unemployed people and the variety of possible group responses make the implementation of outreach policies highly complicated. Three case studies in different geographical regions were undertaken to identify, clarify and explore the development process, features and outcomes of unemployment groups (especially the community-generated, self-help kind) from an educational outreach point of view.

3 CONTACTING AND INVOLVING THE UNEMPLOYED

Outreach is plainly a complicated task requiring deep commitment on the part of institutions and persons who undertake it. Full descriptions of three initiatives are given to illustrate what it involves, particularly the strategy of developing self-help unemployment groups and networks. Obviously this is a developmental process and it is a useful exercise, when reading the accounts, to keep an eye open for the following major features:

Rationale: Why the initiative was thought necessary and the philosophy underpinning it.

Resources: What it cost in human and monetary terms, where the resources came from and how they were obtained.

Methods: How it was undertaken, strategically and technically, and by whom.

Skills: What interpersonal, teaching, organisational, leadership and managerial skills were needed.

Outcomes: What the consequences were for both sides and how these were assessed.

The case studies are the work of Krafchik, M. and Warke, S. (1987) for the Centre for Unemployment Studies Project, Wolverhampton; and of Sarah Warke for both the Dearne Valley Project, South Yorkshire, and the Education Support Grant (ESG) Project in South Devon, and CADURN (Cornwall and Devon Unemployment Resource Network).

CASE STUDIES

Centre for Unemployment Studies Project, Wolverhampton

Unemployment in Wolverhampton, West Midlands, began to rise steeply in 1981, mainly because of the decline of manufacturing industries. It has remained at historically high levels to date (around 20 per cent with a 50 per cent long-term unemployment rate). A number of projects aimed at different groups amongst those out of work have been undertaken. One of these responses has been the promotion of unemployment action groups in a project initiated by development workers from the Centre for Unemployment Studies at Wolverhampton Polytechnic. The workers were concerned that, in most cases, attempts to provide an unemployment centre in the town had failed to find support from unemployed people. A local survey conducted in the winter of 1983/84 concluded that unemployment drop-in centres had little to offer people and therefore they simply drifted away. The analysis suggested that this negative response occurred because these centres had neither an organisation nor coherent aims and objectives which sought to alleviate the effects of unemployment. This was compared with the experience of Liverpool where a network of unemployment centres had begun to be developed through a partnership of groups of unemployed people and trade unionists. The implication was that active groups of unemployed people

could obtain funding, run their own premises and organise themselves on a strong and permanent footing if this was well founded and locally rooted. There was nothing on such a basis existing in Wolverhampton at the time – the promotion of local centres became the aim of the development workers.

The basis for this work was the award in 1984 of a grant, under the Urban Programme, to the Centre for Unemployment Studies, for the Counselling and Teaching (CAT) Programme. The CAT programme was founded intellectually on the writing of Freire, P. (1985) – education was therefore seen as enabling people, who were effectively powerless, to question and then confront the sources of their disadvantage. An integral part of the approach was the development of a group rather than deliberately fostering individual responses. This was because it was believed that part of the pattern of disadvantage was the isolation of individuals in their own homes, with restricted opportunities to mix with other people following job loss. It was widely recognised that, at least in this area, unemployment reinforced divisions between people rather than bringing them together. The central core was the belief that unemployment groups could offer '...a practical and social alternative to the destructive and negative effects of long-term unemployment'. (Howard, R. and Plante, C. 1984.) Therefore, the rationale of the CAT programme was not itself to offer skills training or vocational education but, rather, to work in the embattled middle ground between community development and education. The two groups focused upon here were formed out of this initiative and now exist as free-standing self-help unemployment groups. *(Note: Other groups were tried but one ran into local political difficulties and another did not appeal to a predominantly Asian community and did not survive.) The CAT programme continues in a new form at the polytechnic as the Unemployment Workers Group, jointly funded under the European Programme to Combat Poverty by the EEC and Wolverhampton Borough Council. (This team now includes an additional outreach worker to ethnic minorities funded by the local authority.)*

The programme was first undertaken in two wards in Wolverhampton which were identified as having suffered acutely from the growth of unemployment, although they had not previously been areas of high deprivation. A considerable amount of attention was paid to making contacts with local professionals, community groups and political representatives to lay the groundwork. The early membership of the groups was formed through personally inviting unemployed people along to a ten-week programme which was held in the spring of 1984. It was decided not to rely on leafleting, newspaper advertising or posters to recruit people for the programme, but to adopt the approach of personally revisiting unemployed people who had been interviewed earlier as part of a household survey; it was believed that this method would enable the programme to be more effectively targeted at people who would not normally attend educational courses or take part in community initiatives. The intention was that not only would the individuals learn about the reasons for unemployment and the options available to them during the programme, but they would also form the nucleus of a group which would be able to sponsor continued and innovative work on their own behalf in their own localities.

After the ten-week programme, a core of no more than four people were left in each group. They had no facilities or premises of their own and continued to meet only on a weekly basis in local community centres. There was, though, great determination to continue from the groups and from the development workers and they could, by this time, draw upon a reservoir of support from a growing number of local authority officers and elected members. It was soon clear that they would require funding and premises that were under their own control if they were to achieve an effective and independent role. Various avenues were explored and, for a while, the future of the groups hung in the balance. Eventually, early in 1985, the groups applied for a development grant from NIACE, under the REPLAN initiative, to develop their own local educational activities centre. The proposal emphasised that unemployed people had many skills and would be able to share these with others in the same situation, to teach themselves and to draw upon educational advice by buying it in as required. The bid was successful. A grant of some £20,000 p.a. for two years was awarded to open two centres, to be operated and organised by the unemployed users on the principle originally identified in their proposal. Further resources were later made available by the local authority through its economic development and education committees, which enabled the groups to have use of premises free of rent and rates. The two local centres were open by the summer of 1985 – the Bushbury Unemployed Group (BUG) in an industrial unit and the Bradley Resource Action Group (BRAG) in a building owned (but hardly used) by the local authority. The plans were to open the centres five days a week throughout the year; there were no paid members of staff and they were to be run wholly by their unemployed members. Facilities for childcare were also available to the groups.

At last, given a base from which to operate, the groups began to expand their membership and their activities. The two groups developed their centres separately but have shown many similarities in the way they have organised themselves, and have maintained regular and close contact with each other. The concentration initially was on finding out what local people wanted to do and increasing their membership. In one case, simple word of mouth proved effective in increasing membership; in the other, a small local survey was undertaken to identify local interests and to publicise the centre. There were no set plans about the particular activities which ought to be available there; the financial resources were within the control of the groups and the only limitations on the choices made were the use to which particular premises could be put. It is clear that the groups have been successful in attracting members; both BUG and BRAG currently have a membership list of around 100, across a wide age range and both sexes. (*Note: For details of activities see Krafchik, M. and Warke, S. 1987.)*

The establishment of links with local educational providers has not been ignored and has become increasingly fruitful. However, there was an initial belief amongst some group members that they would not be able to co-operate usefully with educational institutions.

> 'We do meet hostility from the formal education authorities. What we're doing here doesn't fit in with what they're doing. Their idea is, if you want to learn something you run a ten-week course from ten till four, whereas here you pop in when you like....The facilities should not have to fit in with what the authorities want.'

From this situation, the relationship has developed into a more flexible one on both sides. The forms of support and provision which colleges have been able and willing to make for members has been largely 'demand-led', in response to the developing requirements of their members. There have proved to be three forms which this co-operation has taken: the provision of tutors at the centres, the establishment of sessions aimed at group members off-site, and the giving of redundant equipment and general advice and assistance.

There are now three principal methods by which the groups are in contact with educational providers – through area adult education and community organisers, through the group's advisory committee and other committees where both educationists and the groups are represented, and through individual contacts where group members have attended courses. A far greater degree of trust and mutual co-operation has been built up than might originally have been envisaged, with the groups providing a useful forum through which demands on educational providers can be shaped and channelled. (Further details of BUG and BRAG are given in the REPLAN report edited by Groombridge, J. 1987.)

Dearne Valley Project, South Yorkshire

The Dearne Valley is the name given to a collection of small towns and villages in South Yorkshire situated in the middle of a triangle formed by Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham. Predominantly a coal mining district, the area has been hit by pit closures – the most notable of which has been Cortonwood Colliery, the starting-point of the 1984-85 miners' strike. In January 1986, male unemployment in the Dearne Valley stood at 25% and female unemployment at 15.5%, against comparable national averages of 16.8% male and 10.4% female. Faced with a contracting major industry such as mining, and with increasing redundancies, the Dearne Valley has little hope of industrial regeneration and already possesses most of the problems associated with inner city decline.

How do people build new lives for themselves in an environment which offers, primarily, the prospect of long-term unemployment? Since 1981 the Northern College, located three miles outside Barnsley and one of only eight colleges of residential adult education in Britain, has worked closely with the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) to foster links with the local community, trade unions, welfare groups and other organisations to develop work with the adult unemployed. In April 1985 these two educational institutions, together with the Division of Continuing Education at the University of Sheffield, received a grant of £31,000, for 1985-87, under the REPLAN programme to develop better educational opportunities for adults in the Dearne Valley, Northern College has a tradition of offering short courses which are largely community orientated and, as part of this, their work with the unemployed has offered courses responding to community needs such as:

- Understanding Unemployment;
- a 'Community Activities Course';
- Organising your Community Group.

However, with the REPLAN grant, and taking into account difficulties in recruiting adult unemployed people on to formal courses, these institutions decided to develop systematic outreach practices in the Dearne Valley.

The fieldworker, supported by two supervisors – one from Northern College and the other from the WEA, quickly established herself in a local youth club and set about the initial task of finding out who the unemployed were and how they could be contacted by tapping into existing networks. Given the absence of organised groups and unemployment centres at this juncture, the outreach worker, with the assistance of local support networks, e.g. the PTA, Trade Union Council, church and miners' wives support group, organised a social evening at which representatives from Northern College and the WEA spoke about educational opportunities. The social evening was also used to distribute questionnaires and talk to local people about concerns and issues related to their communities and unemployment. This public meeting led to the development of an unemployment group and to the establishment of the week-long course, now part of the curriculum at Northern College, 'Understanding Unemployment.' From the initial group who participated in this course, eight formed the 'Dearne Day Release Group', all unemployed people ranging in age from 35 upwards.

To facilitate this group's learning, the outreach worker, operating on the principle that if students cannot get to tutors then tutors must go to the students, arranged for several tutors from Northern College to visit the group. They jointly arranged a ten-week course at the Youth Centre, along very informal lines but with a planned study programme of basic economics, current events and the decline of employment. The group continues to meet at the new Dearne Enterprise Centre and stresses that learning should relate to people's own experience and needs. It believes that education can be used to benefit individuals directly and also enables individuals to spread the knowledge they have gained through the community.

The Centre offers a range of activities, social and recreational, training and educational, job search, business advice, skills workshops and welfare rights. Unemployed people using the Centre have their own management committee elected from their own number and hold weekly meetings to discuss the use of the Centre and the development of initiatives. Although they do not have independent control of the resources, they contribute to policy decisions and planning and are represented on the overall management committee made up of trade union, statutory and voluntary providers.

The outreach worker sees her role as facilitator, empowering groups, putting them in touch with one another, helping them to find premises in which to meet, getting them the resources and the professional support they need to develop skills and acquire new ones, helping them to define clear goals and objectives, and giving them the confidence to tackle unemployment as a community problem. The emphases are on supporting existing community groups and developing new ones, with the aim that once they become established and have the resources to promote initiatives, they will make demands upon education. These approaches, together with conventional publicity methods, have meant that many unemployed people have been recruited to courses held at the Dearne Enterprise Centre, including a large percentage of long-term unemployed people without educational qualifications. Educational outreach in supporting and facilitating self-help groups is thus enabling the Dearne community to make the best use of its resources. But education is not doing it alone; it is the establishment of inter-agency support and service networks which are the key to successful outreach practices in this instance.

Further details of the outcomes of the project are given in the REPLAN report edited by Groombridge, J. (1987). This report comments:

> 'Outreach activities with the unemployed have to be organised imaginatively and sympathetically. In this project many outreach activities have been successful because the fieldworker modified the nomenclature of formal education and used pubs, clubs, a local vicarage, and students' houses as launching sites for more structured educational activities. Maximum publicity through the media and press releases, through college prospectuses and educational literature, through public announcements, posters and library displays have all proved important. However, in the last analysis, the success of the project has depended upon inter-personal contact and the communication channels of informal community networks. ...But it has to be said that the Dearne Valley Project remains small scale and its overall impact patchy. It may be that the benefits it has offered to the adult unemployed exist at the level of temporary palliatives; it may be that unrealistic expectations have been released. To a certain extent, such outcomes are tied to the nature of the adult education service in the Dearne when the project comes to an end – the Barnsley and Doncaster authorities have already agreed to finance a one-year continuation of the work, and it is hoped that the Rotherham authority will follow suit.'

ESG Project in South Devon and CADURN

Devon is predominantly a rural county which has two main cities, Plymouth and Exeter, and a number of smaller towns among which are Torquay and Barnstaple. Unemployment is close to the UK national average but, due to seasonal unemployment, can rise to as much as 30%. As in other regions, long-term unemployment is increasing as a proportion of the overall total of unemployed in the county. The difficulties experienced by unemployed people in Devon are similar to those elsewhere – material and social deprivation, social isolation, and loss of confidence and motivation – factors which are exacerbated by the isolation of many small communities in Devon and the distances between them. Attendant to these geographical difficulties are those associated with a lack of concentrated resources and, prior to the Devon ESG project which started in 1985, the absence of specific budgetary provision or planned distribution of resources to meet the needs of unemployed people.

The Devon ESG project employs four Area Development Officers (ADOs) to cover the north, south, east and west of the county. They are expected:

- to develop flexible opportunities for study;
- to establish an educational guidance service;
- to open up access to mainstream educational provision;
- to develop self-help groups and drop-in centres;
- to develop education about small business and co-operatives;
- to train existing tutors and other workers in a range of skills;
- to create networks of providers;
- to seek and secure external funding.

The policy of the ADO term is built on a number of principles:

- that provision must be aimed at meeting real needs;
- that those needs can only be identified with/by the unemployed themselves;
- that representative structures need to be built to enable unemployed people to articulate their own needs and to advocate their own causes;
- that provision should not be constrained by institutional boundaries and rules, but should be resourced from a variety of centres – institutional, community, private and public, as appropriate;
- that the needs of the unemployed should determine educational provision, rather than the unemployed being expected to fit the existing educational structures.

The individual ADOs report to the appropriate Area Community Education Officer, and the whole team is responsible to the Senior Adviser for Community Education.

Each ADO has a special responsibility in addition to the common tasks. The ADO for South Devon was to promote the development of information networks as a means of presenting a co-operative approach to the needs, interests and concerns of unemployed people in the county. The ADO described the aims of local networks of unemployment groups as 'identifying and utilising spare capacity in land, buildings and human resources' for the purpose of developing initiatives to meet the needs of unemployed people.

The role of this ADO can then be seen as a facilitator of unemployment self-help groups and a disseminator of information and practice relating to unemployment, although the two tasks are closely related, particularly in an educational self-learning context.

The strategy the ADO used to contact unemployed people was, in the first instance, a survey of some 70 unemployed people, financed by REPLAN and covering a range of organisations and unemployment centres (in Torquay and Newton Abbot) in Devon. To reach the more isolated and alienated of the unemployed, who tended to avoid such centres, a welfare benefits campaign was carried out on a major housing estate, as an alternative to the less successful attempts of offering formal educational courses. This has led to initiatives for a community newspaper, a full-time, staffed centre and an application for a community education officer.

The survey resulted in the setting up of one-day workshops for the unemployed, around key issues which were identified by them; but the poor attendance suggested to the ADO that what was needed to involve the unemployed and motivate them were activity centres which could offer more positive alternatives to unemployment. He felt that projects rather than courses were the answer because working together, sharing ideas and experiences, learning from one another and working towards shared goals and interests are more attractive forms of learning for those who tend to shun formal educational courses. Indeed, he felt that special courses set up with the unemployed in mind could prove stigmatising and might be a factor in the low attendance of such courses.

Believing that the best approach to meeting the needs of unemployed people was to adopt a strategy drawing together a wide range of both statutory and voluntary providers, the ADO became a founding member of Devon's Co-operative Development Agency as well as chairman of CADURN (Cornwall and Devon Unemployment Resource Network). CADURN is an independent voluntary network of groups, initiatives and

people who wish to tackle the problems of unemployment in Cornwall and Devon. Formed in 1983, it involves around 90 member groups and is administered by a committee of elected representatives on which unemployed people must hold half the seats.

The philosophy underlying CADURN is that unemployment need not be a negative force, that unemployed people can contribute positively to their communities and be self-reliant, provided they have the proper support and resources to enable them to make creative use of their time and involve themselves in articulating demands and participating in decisions which affect them and their communities.

To assist the development of unemployment self-help initiatives, CADURN and the South Devon ADO advocate outreach practices which identify who and where unemployed people are and, from these beginnings, assist in the formation and organisation of unemployment groups, helping them to secure both premises and funding for the establishment of activity centres which promote self-reliance in the form of initiatives under the Government's Enterprise Allowance Scheme, or the development of small co-operatives.

The aim of this form of outreach is:

> 'The creation of networks of unemployed groups so that there is a forum for the exchange of information, ideas and initiatives which can also be used to promote and alert public awareness of the needs of unemployed people. In addition to these exchanges will be direct support for projects and people.'

The kind of support which the network offers is assistance to secure any spare capacity in land or buildings which could be used by unemployment groups to foster skills exchange, develop new skills and promote new unemployment initiatives. Community Programme workers from the Torquay and Newton Abbot Unemployment Centres help in this work.

To promote its aims and involvements in community projects, CADURN has made two videos with the support of grants from REPLAN and has used the local ITV station to present a series of six public service broadcasts, shown a total of 35 times. In addition it offered a three-week phone-in service so that people could receive direct information and advice on a range of initiatives and opportunities available to unemployed people.

CADURN has considered the use of a data bank computer link which would be of value to groups who had access to computers and could provide them with local and national information on a wide range of issues related to unemployment. The South Devon ADO has organised two computer appreciation courses and is attempting to develop a mobile computer facility. Finally, CADURN has successfully negotiated a grant from REPLAN to produce an Unemployment Group Start-Up Kit, called 'Green For Go' (see Appendix II on how to obtain free copies).

The ADO recognises that much of the outreach which he engages in, particularly his involvement with CADURN, is not the traditional outreach practice of formal educational institutes. Indeed, the premise on which it is based is that educational outreach must enable unemployed people to articulate their own demands and engage in their own advocacy. However, this requires a range of skills and it is unrealistic that any one person, particularly an untrained person, could hope to acquire the range of professional skills necessary to lead a group through its stages of development, because he or she would need to be a legal adviser, counsellor, personnel officer, press officer, etc. Thus his task, together

with his colleagues, is to provide some of these skills, secure help from other professionals and agencies to supply others and, above all, train unemployed people in them. This is one of the current major priorities and tasks of the project.

LESSONS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

Although the lessons from these case studies will be closely examined in the succeeding chapters on the role of the colleges and unemployment groups in the outreach and inreach processes, some preliminary general observations can be made along the lines suggested at the start of this Chapter.

Rationale

Research on prolonged high levels of unemployment and the observable fact that many unemployed people were not using educational services provided the reason, impetus and direction for action. It was believed that the problem would not be resolved easily or early. Existing practices were not tackling the core of the problem which consisted of the social isolation of unemployed people and the inability of professional institutions and workers to make effective contact on a wide scale. The impoverishment of unemployed people and their powerlessness to remedy it, coupled with the belief that given a chance they could tackle this condition, summoned up a philosophical approach indebted to the ideas of Freire, P. (1985) and Lovett, T. (1975). In essence this is a critical understanding of the sources and dimensions of disadvantage, leading to action to overcome it. In the case studies it was thought that this could be mainly manifested in self-help groups fostered by educational institutions. At a more pragmatic level, there was a perceived need for learning opportunities which a UDACE report (1987, p.20) argues are best when they:

- are relevant to our needs;
- build on existing knowledge and experience;
- are provided at appropriate times and places.

Resources

The salaries of the outreach and development workers were paid by various funding agencies, such as ESG, urban programme, REPLAN and EEC. The MSC contributed indirectly when Community Programme workers in Wolverhampton and South Devon assisted the outreach workers for short spells. Local authority support appears to have been critical, particularly in Wolverhampton where a senior political member and a senior council officer made sure the project continued even if on a hand-to-mouth basis. Also, continuation of the projects is dependent on mainstream funding from this source.

The operational costs of the workers have been relatively small and institutions have met many of these in kind, e.g. the polytechnic covered the office costs of the outreach workers. Budgets for the workers have been small but essential for pump-priming purposes and external funds have been secured for specific products such as publications. Resources for the groups, similarly, have come from diverse sources, in bits and pieces. Only the Wolverhampton project has achieved longer term stability, but that is after years of insecurity.

Methods

Surveys, mapping exercises, contact with community agencies, networking, use of mass media and direct approaches to unemployed people have figured largely in the methods used. Capitalising on the goodwill of agencies and capturing the trust of unemployed people have been the cardinal principles on which the work has been based. Working as a team has been of immense benefit to the individual workers.

Skills

The formal qualifications of the workers have varied considerably, with the Wolverhampton workers, for instance, although graduates, untrained in outreach work. All of them, however, have demonstrated a deep commitment to the task and a ready willingness to learn. Staff development in outreach skills has not been systematic and has relied to a fair extent on the REPLAN programme. However, the workers have been supported in further education and training according to their personal career interests.

The major skills for the work have been interpersonal and organisational, with sufficient political competence to make the most of the system to get resources. All the workers recognise the need for training unemployed people in leadership, organisational, administrative and lobbying skills. Specific courses at Northern College and the start-up kit of CADURN are examples of practical implementation. Wherever possible, the workers have encouraged mutual learning of these skills between members of the groups.

Outcomes

All the outreach workers are subject to supervision and monitoring. In the Wolverhampton case this includes evaluation by an external agency. The workers submit regular reports to management and steering committees, which are then routed to the appropriate local authority committees.

Criteria for evaluating the groups include growth in membership numbers and range of activities; their developing relationships with a variety of agencies at community, local authority and even regional, national and, in the Wolverhampton case, international levels; numbers getting jobs or embarking on further education and training, attracting external funding; and community service. In more personal terms, members should be increasing their self-confidence, sharing their skills and learning to manage the group's affairs.

On the negative side, internal dissension, loss of interest and disintegration of some groups have also occurred. The outreach workers have been successful in defusing conflict in most of the few cases where it has occurred, but have failed in one or two instances. This illustrates the vital point that, ultimately, individual unemployed people judge outcomes by voting with their feet.

4 THE COLLEGES AND OUTREACH

OUTREACH: DEFINITIONS AND ROLE OF OUTREACH WORKERS

A theme running through the analysis of unemployment and the case studies is that learning begins at 'home', i.e. in local circumstances and under local conditions. This is the starting-point for colleges and educational services if they are to appeal to and attract people who are not naturally 'at home' with them.

Two major reports stress this point:

> 'If we are to meet all our needs effectively, we need access to a wide, varied and flexible range of learning opportunities to match our many and varied needs.' (UDACE, 1987, p.1.)
>
> The REPLAN projects 'reveal the importance of local solutions to educational need and the necessity for outreach work and co-operation with non-educational and other community agencies.' (Purdy, M. in Groombridge, J. 1987, p.5.)

This goes beyond the out-take version of outreach. It is not simply a matter of taking the college's wares to the local doorstep. Of course, this is much preferable to a 'come-and-get-it' model and will pay dividends, but it is unlikely to break through the social isolation of unemployed people and their suspicions of 'authority'.

> 'Outreach has been used to describe a marketing exercise, when it forms part of a more sophisticated approach to the planning of a course than has conventionally been the case. In this sense, it concentrates attention on the need to target provision at particular groups, and on making contacts with sections of the population who are identified as being under-represented within educational provision. There is clearly a need for this type of work; undertaken with sufficient resources it has many institutional advantages and is applicable across a broader spectrum than just unemployed people.' (Krafchik, M. and Warke, S. 1987, p.3.)

The difficulty with out-take, however, is that it is perceived as college-dominated and, even when it uses non-institutional locations and flexible timings (Watts, A.G. and Knasel, E.G. 1985, p.27), still smacks of official control. Rather, another version of outreach attempts to resolve the difficult problem of learner control of the educational experience. Kevin Ward has defined this as:

> 'Outreach is a process whereby people who would not normally use adult education are contacted in non-institutional settings, becoming involved in attending and eventually in jointly planning and controlling activities, schemes and courses relevant to their circumstances and needs.' (*REPLAN Review No. 1*, DES. 1986, p.1.)

The process can be manifested in many forms, e.g. WEA 'Second Chance' courses, but probably its most fully fledged form is that of unemployment self-help groups where the college is not guaranteed a return on its investment or has to take a long-term view of pay-off in terms of student recruitment because it places control of what is learned, how it is learned and with and through whom learning takes place in the hands of the learners themselves. Obviously, this means that questions of values and philosophical commitment rank as high as economic return. Also the process, at least initially, places intrinsic or experiential learning higher than extrinsic or 'taught' learning (Evans, N. 1985). Accordingly, a number of issues are raised by this approach:

- degree of commitment of college senior management manifested in allocation of resources;
- adoption of a relatively unorthodox style of pedagogy and the appointment/training of staff to perform it;
- review of criteria of student success so that participation rather than attainment counts (see Titmus, C. 1981).

The status and role of outreach workers, therefore, become a vital matter. A national survey of ESG projects by Krafchik, M. and Portwood, D. (1987) revealed that the most favourable terms and conditions for this kind of worker were usually achieved through secondment policies rather than by special appointments. This gives workers a sense of security and offers the best opportunity for the work to become mainstream. The case studies suggest that team-work is preferable but, at the very least, supportive supervision and management are essential.

> 'Isolation, lack of support and training, low status . . . many outreach workers would support these criticisms of their job. The problems are particularly acute for workers on their own; outreach workers can be much more effective if they are part of a team, either within an agency or by establishing their own team structure by joint working with other professionals. It is, however, primarily the responsibility of managers, administrators or organisers to ensure that outreach workers are given adequate support, status and resources.' (*REPLAN Review No. 1*, DES, 1986, p.8.)

The corollary of such support is accountability. A clear reporting system and, possibly, a steering committee of interested parties are needed. This will counter tendencies for the work to become marginalised. In all this, a key consideration is the continuity of the work because not only is the groundwork a lengthy process but groups themselves need continuing support if they are to progress from short-term to long-term aims and objectives.

STARTING UNEMPLOYMENT SELF-HELP LEARNING GROUPS

The practical promotion and development of self-help learning groups has received much attention, particularly in the publications of the National Extension College (e.g. Cranwell, B. 1986; Dauncey, G. 1983; Falshaw, M. 1985; Pender, C. 1985). These, together with the Open University REPLAN Project materials (see Appendix II) and the earlier-mentioned CADURN (1987) start-up kit (page 16), mean that outreach workers have plenty of practical advice available. Nonetheless, it is helpful to sketch the elements of the stages of the process to identify just

which skills and what resources are required. The stages may be identified as:

- pre-group;
- group organisation;
- group development.

For a slightly different model see Johnston, R. (1987), where he identifies the stages as:

- finding out about the target community;
- initial contacts;
- individual and group development;
- from group involvement to group control.

Pre-group stage

A series of questions need to be asked at this stage:

Who are to be reached?

Are the groups to be open to all or targeted? What is known about the age, sex and ethnic composition of the local unemployed population? What information is there on special groups such as people with special needs?

Where are they to be reached?

Where do they live? Where do they meet? Where do they shop?

How are they to be reached?

Are intermediaries to be used, such as community leaders or organisers? What forms of publicity are to be used? Is direct personal contact through surveys, door-knocking, social events to be used? Can a referral system be developed with other agencies?

When are they to be reached?

When news of sizeable redundancies breaks? When they are long-term unemployed? When they come off government job or training schemes?

What are they to be reached about?

Is there a meeting place? Is there an outline programme? What realistic outcomes are possible for the group?

Such questioning will enable the worker to assess costs and whether or not they can be met from existing budgets or found from other sources. This in itself will begin to focus the project and make it manageable. Also, it will provide a checklist of necessary skills and whether the worker will need help with some of them, e.g.:

- to design a questionnaire;
- to analyse and assess community data already available;
- to utilise existing resources for a venue or to find one;
- to promote an initial meeting by means of advertising posters, publicity leaflets, press releases, etc.;
- to communicate with local providers and agencies;
- to organise and administer a community meeting;
- to find and secure appropriate resources.

'The outreach work needs to develop the ability to listen actively and constructively. Time is needed to get a balanced picture of the local area and local people's concerns without blundering into precipitate and irreversible action.' (Johnston, R. 1987, p.60.)

Note: *Further information on the University of Southampton/Hampshire LEA REPLAN Outreach Project is given in Groombridge, J. (1987), pp 46-47. This same publication gives details of targeted outreach, e.g. to women in Tyneside (pp 16-17) and unemployed managers in Billericay, Essex (pp 48-49).*

Group organisation stage

The outreach worker needs to clarify, with those who have responded, the following questions:

What are the purposes of the group?

The UDACE list (interest, service, advocacy, community, vocational and social activity) has already been described (page 8), and provides a helpful check. The important issue is to develop collective aims, but these need to be divided into short term and long term.

What skills are available to the group?

An audit of members' skills is necessary. At this stage the outreach worker may have to exercise leadership skills, but should encourage members to adopt this role as soon as possible. Courses such as that at Northern College should be utilised.

Zoe Bremmer of the Mary Ward Unwaged Group has listed the kind of administrative and other skills which are required:

- filing;
- typing;
- note taking;
- writing letters;
- answering the telephone;
- word processing;
- pasting-up leaflets, etc.;
- writing advertisements;
- writing press releases;
- chairing meetings;
- speaking to other voluntary groups;
- counselling;
- foreign languages:
  reading, writing, speaking, understanding;
- other skills, such as handicrafts or decorating, which members can teach each other;
- knowledge of or connection with other voluntary organisations, such as charities or church organisations.

What constitution is applicable to the group?

In addition to the aims and objectives already decided by the group, this will include the customary formal offices of chair, secretary and treasurer, but the crucial question is the form of control of the group – is it to be fully democratic and how is this to be achieved? Also how does this constitution relate to any sponsoring agencies and their managerial requirements? The constitution is important because it signals to funding bodies that the group is at a stage in its development where it is capable, with minimal support, of administering and managing resources. The officers provide a channel for negotiation between the parties.

'BRAG is not run by one person but by everyone who attends the group. We have weekly meetings where everyone can have their say in the running of the group. These meetings and the topics that are raised have rejuvenated my mind and put it back to work which, after five years' unemployment, was in danger of becoming stagnant.' (Violet – BRAG, Wolverhampton.)

The case studies in this project and others elsewhere indicate that this clarification of purpose, identification of skills and formulation of a constitution will probably require an initial study programme organised by the outreach worker but negotiated with the group. An example is given in a resource pack produced by NIACE REPLAN/Sandown College (1987) (see Appendix II) where the following topics are covered in 11 sessions:

- negotiation: getting to know the group;
- taking group decisions;
- causes of unemployment;
- committee skills;
- making your voice heard;
- alternatives to unemployment – education;
- alternatives to unemployment – leisure;
- alternatives to unemployment – self-help initiatives;
- alternatives to unemployment – employment and training;
- alternatives to unemployment – working for yourself;
- discovering your rights.

Johnston (1987, p.63) notes the dangers of being too prescriptive or too open-ended and advises that it is better to err on the side of having an arranged programme, albeit over a short period. The programme itself must reflect the needs and interest of the group. Johnston adds a cautionary note:

> 'Moving from a programme of general interest to a deeper focus on areas specifically identified by the group is a slow, episodic and frustrating business. It can often depend on the emergence of key individuals with leadership skills who, at a later date, move on to further education or employment.'

Skills required by the outreach worker (or helpers) at this stage include:

- organising and administering a programme and being familiar with a range of statutory/voluntary providers who will be willing to contribute to the programme in terms of time, advice and assistance, including the use of premises and the materials necessary for participation in any activities;
- building up members' confidence and identifying skills, talents and knowledge;
- leading without controlling the interests of members;
- assisting in the collective formulation of aims and objectives and avoiding suggesting or imposing the workers' own interests and values, educational, social and political;
- knowing the dynamics and functions of groups and the roles within them in order to facilitate decision-making processes and activities;
- encouraging the exchange of information, experience and views as a way of building mutual trust;
- arranging for practical support for members' needs, such as a crèche.

Group development stage

Advances will be made by the group, at this stage, at policy, managerial and activity levels, provided that a satisfactory answer can be found to the crucial questions:

- How, where and from whom to obtain resources?
- How to manage resources effectively.

The outreach worker's support for the group will depend heavily on his/her knowledge of local providers, both statutory and voluntary, and relationships with officers responsible for the resource distribution. In addition, the worker needs to know various charitable institutions, forms of local and central government funding, MSC, and wider sources such as the European Social Fund. He/she should be able to assist the group in drafting a proposal for funding which meets the criteria of the agencies, describes the group's aims, how the resources will be managed and developed and what systems of accountability will operate between the group and funding body, including accounting procedures. To achieve the latter, the outreach worker may need to organise a short course on basic bookkeeping. The critical issue is finding premises and equipment. CADURN (1987) recommends that consideration should be given to sharing someone else's premises (e.g. Council for Voluntary Services or community organisations) because you:

- will have access to photocopiers, typewriters, duplicators, coffee-making equipment, snackbars, canteens, cleaners, notice-boards;
- will be rubbing shoulders with other initiatives and groups which might be involving unemployed people, and which might attract members of your own group;
- might get help from people running other courses or projects in the same building, e.g. funding or advice.

The case studies illustrated that the question of resources is central to the group's development and all saw the local authority as the main and only relatively stable source. However, CADURN (1987) advises that the net should be cast widely and the University of London Project at Billericay confirms it:

> 'This project has shown that careful development of a community's network, supported by modest public funding, can attract continuing support. The original funding, or its equivalent, came from various sources: Billericay Rotary paid for a year's rent of the rooms, and the owners of the rooms halved the rent for a year; the Billericay Christian Council gave free premises for two days a week. The Great Burstead Foundation gave £100 for books; the Shell Community Fund gave £250 for capital equipment. Since the end of REPLAN funding, the Billericay Rotary has again covered a year's rent, and other voluntary organisations have indicated they will also help; Basildon Unemployed Workers Centre has underwritten the continuation of the Centre and its staff; the Ford of Britain Trust has made a grant of £2,000; and the Billericay Christian Council has promised a grant of £400.' (Groombridge, J. 1987, p.49.)

If only for this reason of getting and managing resources, the withdrawal of the outreach worker must be gradual. The best support, however, that he/she can give at this stage is participatory training with the group to pass on skills, knowledge and contacts.

SUPPORTING UNEMPLOYMENT SELF-HELP LEARNING GROUPS

Outreach workers in the three case studies reported requests from existing unemployment groups for the kind of practical support at the organisational and development stages detailed above. In particular, advice and help have been sought on the following:

- leasing premises;
- purchase of equipment based around the group's interests;
- group insurance;
- use of equipment, and health and safety regulations;
- administration of budgeting;
- publicity;
- making a video;
- recruitment
- skills exchange;
- training in welfare benefits advice;
- establishing links with adult and FE colleges;
- making use of the media;
- preparation of magazines on useful information and good practice;
- training leaders;
- learning to lobby;
- developing a corporate approach to unemployment with other statutory and voluntary bodies.

The workers tend to find contacts with existing groups rewarding, partly because it avoids the time-consuming pre-group stage but mainly because the groups often consist of people they themselves would find difficulty in getting together. The Centre for Unemployment Studies Project particularly finds this the case with ethnic minority groups.

While seeking to sustain the group's autonomy and control of its resources, the outreach worker will act in a liaison capacity between the group and the college(s). This will lead to some form of collaboration which Watts, A.G. and Knasel, E.G. (1985, p.23) identify as:

> 'Communication – where institutions and groups retain their individual programmes and modes of work, but efforts are made to arrive at a better understanding of each other;
>
> Co-operation – where institutions and groups collaborate on a joint project or task;
>
> Co-ordination – where institutions and groups alter their established working patterns to provide a programme on an integrated basis.'

Obviously such collaboration will affect college structures and staff attitudes and change may not be readily welcomed.

> 'Drop-in centres where the unemployed teach themselves using learning packages are already successfully in operation. The unemployed can come in when they want, for as long as they want, and make progress through programmes at a pace which suits them. It was believed that some teachers feel that their jobs are threatened by the use of such learning methods.' (Centre for Educational Development and Training, Manchester Polytechnic 1985, p.6.)

Outreach workers, as in the case of the ESG project, South Devon, find contact with existing groups puts them in touch with a wide range of agencies which are already formed or can be formed into a network.

> 'The idea of a network obviously emphasises links between existing groups and, with the recent proliferation of projects around unemployment, there is an urgent need for this. CADURN's is a useful experience. (*REPLAN Review No. 1*, DES, 1986, p.6.)

Another outcome is given by the REPLAN project at the Old Swan Technical College, Liverpool:

> 'This aspect of the project's work (outreach to existing groups) led to the development of an extended network of agencies with which the college linked. These agencies went on to be used as locations for publicising college provision and the workers in these agencies were able to provide initial information and advice about what the college had to offer. But more than that, the agencies increasingly identified unmet needs and approached the college to make a response.' (Groombridge, J. 1987, p.8.)

5 UNEMPLOYMENT GROUPS AND OUTREACH

Outreach workers are message bearers from the groups to the colleges. However, institutional policies, management support, colleagues' attitudes and their own college status govern how seriously their information is taken. Much the same conditions apply to the views and knowledge of unemployed people.

> 'It seems frequently to be the case that curriculum content and style is often determined by education providers themselves unilaterally deciding what ought to be provided for "the unemployed". There is little evidence of attempts to ascertain need by field work, by networking with unemployed groups themselves, or with the great variety of statutory and voluntary groups which provide formal and informal education for the unemployed. Equally, there are few examples of adequate systems of feedback to providers from unemployed participants in education.' (Leicestershire ESG Report, April 1986.)

Some unemployed people believe that educationists find the approach and style of unemployment groups' learning activities strange, even unacceptable, and, therefore, do not want to learn from them.

> Pete: 'We do meet hostility from the formal educational authorities. What we're doing doesn't fit in with what they're doing.'
>
> Oswald: 'What the education people have got to realise is that people have got something in them and they can help bring it out by meeting them on their own ground.'
>
> (BUG, Wolverhampton)

> 'Sometimes it seems that tutors restrict our growth because they are part of a system which is out of touch with people's needs. Sometimes this means that they are blind to progress. There is always a lot of red tape when you want to get something going. Having said that, we are grateful to Goldsmiths' in trying to do something new and taking some risks. This is how it should be in education.' (Snowden, P.J. in Goldsmiths' College, 1987, Report on Outreach Education Project.)

Minimum conditions for inreach to take place are:

- evaluation systems of outreach activities covering successes and failures in which unemployed people play a prominent part;
- communication systems which allow for feedback by written reports and word of mouth from those who have been contacted and involved;
- participation systems by which the representatives of colleges and unemployed groups serve on each others' formal committees and working groups and discuss their mutual interests and concerns.

Clearly these reflect institutional policies and attitudes to unemployment groups and equally how the groups perceive and use the services of the colleges.

In the case of The Centre for Unemployment Studies' Project, its steering committee, which comprises elected members, officers, polytechnic staff and unemployed people (50 per cent of the total membership), ensures that reports, views and recommendations are fed into the local authority committee structure. The groups' own advisory committee, which includes college representatives and community workers, provides a direct link with the colleges' management systems.

Inreach, of course, can be incidental – what individual college staff members pick up from the groups – but to be effective it needs to be systematic and official and convince unemployed people that colleges and officers are taking heed of what they say. Plainly, local conditions – cultural, geographical, political and industrial – will affect structures and styles of inreach procedures and practices, but where outreach successfully reaches and involves people it must then take the next step of permitting them to participate in policies and decisions over what is provided for them.

Apart from matters of philosophy and principle, the practical justifications for inreach are considerable, e.g.:

It provides a source of intelligence on the educational needs of unemployed people.

> 'The impact of the groups on other organisations and institutions has been quite marked. Colleges and other adult education establishments are becoming more responsive and sensitive to the special needs of the unemployed.' (Wolverhampton LEA in Groombridge, J. 1987, p.29.)
>
> 'The priority for the outreach worker was to work with the existing members of the Horwich Unemployed Group (HUG) to undertake an extensive outreach exercise to discuss with the unemployed people in the town what services they wished to see developed and what activities they would like to be involved with.' (Horwich Unemployed Support Group in Groombridge, J. 1987, p.10.)

It provides a new set of outreach workers and new forms of outreach:

> 'The outreach activities are now controlled by the local group rather than by the worker or a local council department. An example of this is that the management group has recently discussed an outreach strategy aimed at newcomers on the estate, which would involve the residents, not the workers, in visiting the homes of new residents.' (Community Centre in Caernarvon reported in REPLAN Review No. 1, 1986, p.6.)

It produces new materials for outreach development:

> 'In November 1985 the college convened a meeting of unemployed adults already involved in their communities in a variety of ways. The experience of these people was considered essential in assisting the college to develop this area of work. At this meeting it was agreed to hold a series of meetings in which college staff and this group of unemployed people would explore and develop such a curriculum. Ten meetings were held, during which the group identified what they saw as the key areas of knowledge and skill. These meetings also afforded the college staff involved a chance to try out ways of working which involved ongoing negotiation of the curriculum, and maximum participant involvement. This pack contains resources, based on these meetings.' (NIACE/Sandown College, 1987, *Active in the Community: Resource Pack for Use with Unemployed Adults*. See Appendix II on how to obtain copies.)

It provides a source and means for broad curriculum development:

> 'On the basis of research findings, the unit came to the conclusion that if adults were to be encouraged to enter the college, then a new revolutionary system had to be created that enabled the individual to stand at the centre and make the system revolve around his or her requirements.' (Bilston Community College, Wolverhampton, reported in *REPLAN Review No. 2*, 1987, DES, p.6.)

> 'What was most encouraging was the response within the college from the departments delivering the options. All were fully committed to the provision and saw it as part of their total programme. Tutors devised courses with flexible, modular formats and introduced more varied, vocational options into the programme. Participants constantly dropped in to the co-ordinator for guidance, negotiation of their programme, advice on further training or jobs, or just to chat.' (Weston-super-Mare College of FE reported in Groombridge, J. 1987, p.45.)

The main developments relate to guidance services, negotiated learning programmes and modularisation of courses.

It promotes fuller use of college resources and is an agency for college recruitment:

> 'Two colleges of further education were approached and they now provide courses on the estate. One example is a course on building and construction which makes use of "infill places", but is run on an outreach basis by the college, using the Braunstone workshops as a base. These courses are jointly planned by the college and the resident training groups.' (The Braunstone Employment Project reported in *REPLAN Review No. 1*, 1986, DES, p.4.)

> 'The aim of the project was to encourage the Royal Forest of Dean College and the Forest of Dean Trade Council Centre to co-operate in developing opportunities for unemployed adults in the Forest.... At the Centre, 16 people joined a computer literacy programme, and other activities now included photography, rock school and women's woodwork. A summer camp was held, and a caravan advice service piloted....In 1984/5 (before the project started), 12 unwaged students had enrolled at the College; in 1985/87, 250 unwaged students enrolled. This is the largest proportionate increase in Gloucestershire.' (Forest of Dean Centre Project, in Groombridge, J. 1987, p.38.)

It assists strategic and research developments in this field;

> 'During the last six months, when the emphasis and concentration has been on the project's action strategy, that strategy has been reviewed and modified, partly as a result of discussions with unwaged people....We feel that there is a need to make sure that all those unwaged adults who are interested can participate actively in the whole "action – reflection – action" process of the project... we hope to set up further sessions which will maintain a continuing dialogue in the development of the project and its research.' (Southampton Adult Unemployed Project, Community Education Worker's Report, 10.6.85.)

It provides the base for bids for external funding:

> 'The success of BUG and BRAG was also instrumental in funding being secured from the EEC Poverty Programme (£250,000 million), enabling the Unemployment Workers Group employees to establish similar groups in other parts of the borough. Issues which affect the unemployed have been given a higher profile.' (Wolverhampton LEA in Groombridge, J. 1987, p.29.)

It serves as a powerful support in negotiations with the local authority for resources or change:

> 'It is important to emphasise the importance of dealing with groups. In any process requiring negotiation, the standing of a representative who can speak with the authority of a group behind them will normally far outweigh the credibility and confidence of an individual. Although the groups have never taken on an overtly campaigning aspect – indeed they have been expressly non-party political – they have necessarily been drawn into a role of advocate for particular approaches to educational and other social provision. In this role they prove a strong and credible ally for educationalists working for change.' (Krafchik, M. and Warke, S. 1987.)

These examples indicate some of the many and varied benefits of inreach. Basically it can mean that provision in some instances can be extended at little extra cost, and that in other cases resources may be saved through sharing knowledge and collaborative action. However, it is never an easy process for several reasons:

- it may challenge preconceptions on both sides and will be directed towards change for which there may be little heart or resources;
- colleges have to balance many interests of which those of unemployment groups are one. This may be interpreted as lack of interest or commitment and dissuade attempts to learn from each other;
- there are few instances of planned and operational systems of inreach, but a search for effective consultative machinery between the two sides is clearly under way. In the meantime it seems that project workers may have to act as brokers and message bearers.

> 'There were two main strands to the work, the first involving the women themselves, and the second influencing the main providers of adult education in the area. To make contact with women who might not previously have considered returning to learning as an option, several approaches were used....
>
> The other part of the work was to influence existing providers, and to raise their awareness of the needs of unwaged women. Issues relating to learning opportunities for women were included in staff training sessions in local colleges, schools and polytechnics. Information on the issues concerned were offered to officers of the local education authority and to local politicians. A newsletter offering support and information was circulated to a range of providers in the area. Finally, with a view to encouraging the colleges to provide crèches after the project was over, the project offered to run crèche sessions in exchange for tutor sessions.' (Tyneside Women's Employment Project in Groombridge, J. 1987, p.16.)

6 CONCLUSIONS

Outreach is rising on the educational agenda, partly because of a reawakening interest in equal opportunities but also as part of a broad re-examination of the philosophy and practice of adult education. It focuses on college-community relations and the contribution of colleges to social and economic regeneration. More prosaically, but in the end decisively, colleges need to recruit a new adult clientele to replace shrinkages in the 18- to 20-year-old population which they have traditionally recruited.

Unemployed people are an obvious target in this situation. They appear to be available and also in need of educational services. Colleges, however, have had to learn that their provision and approach are not necessarily suitable or attractive. Their basic problem is to contact, engage and involve unemployed people whose diversity of needs and capabilities may challenge existing policies and practice. Specifically at issue is the approach to individuals on an individualistic basis. Few unemployed people have experienced or think of education in ways which make this approach appealing. Rather they need to find out about learning itself by practising it in settings where they are comfortable and can judge the results on their terms. This may take the form of self-help learning groups which, for many unemployed people, are a necessary preliminary to understanding and using formal provision. Groups are an important vehicle for learning to appreciate learning and then to avail oneself of opportunities beyond the scope of the group. Thus outreach, as opposed to out-take, may use the creation and/or support of unemployment groups as a major strategic focus of its work.

Hence, while there is a general mood for outreach, it has to be translated into action within the local situation. This is important because it is plain from a review of outreach projects that there is no single formula for success. However, there is a framework of principles, issues and considerations from which effective local policy and action can be constructed. This too is important because it is evident from the same review that colleges and LEAs are not learning all they could from their own unemployment groups. Perhaps the cardinal need in this area is to develop systems and procedures which will enable colleges and unemployment groups to share knowledge and take collaborative action.

> 'It would seem to be in the general public interest for the experience, power and resources of the statutory bodies to be united with the vitality, commitment and expertise of the voluntary sector in pursuit of the common goal of providing rich and varied educational opportunities for adults in the community.' (McGivney, V. 1984.)

The first consideration is the nature of the relationship between the colleges and unemployed people. While outreach may be college initiated, the college must be wary of autocratic or paternalistic forms of control. Unemployed people will rarely congregate and respond on such terms. Equally, professional domination of outreach developments need to be avoided. This only stresses client dependence and unemployed people are compulsorily affected far too much in this way already. The colleges and outreach workers should premise their work on a belief in the capabilities of unemployed people. Patronising or sentimental views about them are not helpful to initiating responses from them.

It follows that education for unemployed people should not be completely separated from mainstream provision. Unemployed people are a special case of disadvantage but this does not call for totally isolated treatment. It would only exacerbate their general problem of being divided from others and being made dependent. The status of outreach within the college's priorities accordingly carries symbolic as well as practical significance. Tokenism will be treated by unemployed people for what it is worth.

Nonetheless, while unemployed people need to control their own learning activities, they also need the help of the colleges to start and support their self-help learning groups. This report has analysed this process as passing through pre-group, group organisation and group development stages. At all points the outreach worker has been characterised as facilitator and the college as a back-up service. The intention throughout this development is to create conditions for learning to take place and to provide learning activities only as and when demanded by the groups. The model is demand-led provision which ensures not only respect for the views, interests and sensitivities of unemployed people but also value-for-money provision by the colleges. It will actually be required and used.

The resource implications of this approach are fundamental to its effectiveness. Who does it, on what terms and conditions, where they do it, with what kind of support (notable budgetary provision), for how long, and how they are assessed are basic resource questions. For the colleges this means a re-examination of how they balance competing demands and interests. For the unemployment groups it challenges their contribution to the work of the colleges as well as their own efforts to develop themselves. Obviously the groups will question the colleges' priorities, but equally they must articulate the benefits of doing so.

To achieve maximum usefulness for each other, the colleges and unemployment groups need to systematise their relationship at the levels of communication, evaluation and participation. This should be as flexible as possible to allow for changes in needs, aspirations and activities. The spirit of partnership must infect the rules of procedure. Nevertheless, the principle of participation should be demonstrated in practice, with representatives from each side serving on the formal bodies of the other.

These structures and ethos must be rooted in local conditions and circumstances. Grass roots intelligence will need to be supplemented by research of needs, interests and skills if outreach is to be targeted effectively. Minority groups will require special understanding and initiatives. In turn, outreach workers with such specific briefs will require special training and support. There is little available along these lines at present and training institutions need to be alerted to the paramount need for courses in outreach work for staff in both the voluntary and statutory sectors.

The many examples of good practice in outreach referred to in this report, together with the fewer instances of inreach, indicate that the time is opportune for careful examination of the outcomes of these practices. Policy making would benefit and learning materials would be generated. The question of funding this particular form of outreach could then be appraised. What is clear from this study of outreach and inreach is that while it is far from a simple process, both colleges and unemployed people benefit from becoming involved with each other. In times when adult education is being re-examined and the college-community relationship is being redescribed, this approach signals one way forward.

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Institutional and Non-Institutional Agencies Visited

The following institutional and non-institutional agencies were visited during the course of this project, contributed to the one-day conference for outreach workers in Wolverhampton, June 1986, or supplied written reports on their outreach projects for the adult unemployed:

Barnsley Enterprise Centre, South Yorkshire
Basingstoke and Dean Centre for the Unemployed
Bilston Community College, Wolverhampton
Birmingham Centre for the Unemployed
Birmingham Job Change Project
Bradley Resource Action Group
Bushbury Unemployed Group
Centre for Unemployment Studies, The Polytechnic, Wolverhampton
Cheltenham Unemployed Centre
Coalville Technical College, Leicester
College of Adult Education, Wolverhampton
Collyhurst Community Education Centre, Manchester
Cornwall and Devon Unemployment Resource Network
Coventry Unemployed Centre
Dearne Enterprise Centre, Rotherham, South Yorkshire
Education for Unemployed Adults Project, Sandwell
ESG Development and Information Officers, Leicestershire
Exeter's Forward Centre
Highfields Youth and Community Centre, Leicester
Hinckley College of Further Education, Leicestershire
Lambeth Adult Education Institute, ILEA
Leeds Unemployed Centre
Mary Ward Centre, London
Newton Abbot Halcyon Centre
Northern College, Barnsley, South Yorkshire (ESG Project)
Open Learning Centre, St Austell, Cornwall
Solihull Education and Training Centre
South Devon ESG Development Officer
The Gate Project, Wolverhampton
Torquay Unemployed Centre
University of Southampton, Department of Adult Education
WEA 'Second Chance', Telford
Wolverhampton Unemployment Workers Group, EEC Project

Resource Packs/ Kits for Outreach Work

Useful resource packs/kits for outreach work with unemployment groups include:

'Green for Go': A Start-Up Kit for Unemployed Groups, published by CADURN/REPLAN. Free copies are obtainable from Kevin Dixon, CADURN, Youth Office, Bridge House, Courtenay Street, Newton Abbot, Devon.

Active in the Community: Resource Pack for Use with Unemployed Adults, published by NIACE/REPLAN. For details or copies contact NIACE, 19b De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GE, or David Davies, Old Swan Centre, Sandown College, Broadgreen Road, Liverpool L13 5SQ.

Action Planning: A Course for Unemployed People, published by the Open University, Community Education Section. The study pack includes two audio-cassettes on case studies, but mainly consists of 50 topic leaflets with active learning exercises on the following themes:

Survival/Social support/Group initiatives/ Self-assessment/Work in your life/Personal development/Special groups/Action plan.

Further details from Community Education, Centre for Continuing Education, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA

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OBJECTIVES

The objectives for which **The Further Education Unit (FEU)** is established are to promote, encourage and develop the efficient provision of further education in the United Kingdom and for that purpose:

a) to review and evaluate the range of existing further education curricula and programmes and to identify overlap, duplication, deficiencies and inconsistencies therein;

b) to determine priorities for action to improve the provision of further education and to make recommendations as to how such improvement can be effected;

c) to carry out studies in further education and to support investigations of and experimentation in, and the development of further education curricula and to contribute to and assist in the evaluation of initiatives in further education;

d) to disseminate and publish information and to assist in the dissemination and publication of information about recommendations for and experiments and developments in further education.